DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS OF THE LEBANON

By ELIAHU EPSTEIN

THE Lebanese Republic covers an area of about 10,000 sq. k.* The population was last assessed in the Order of the President dated June 17, 1945, as the number of citizens registered in the registration records on December 31, 1942. This Order also referred to a number of Lebanese who had emigrated but had retained their Lebanese citizenship.

The Order in question was published in connection with the elections to the Lebanese Parliament. Although the Moslem communities disagreed with the correctness of the number given, the Order remains the official document pending the holding of a general Census which will determine the figures more precisely.

The following is the table which served as the foundation for fixing the population of the Lebanon as on January 1, 1945:†

Communities.	Inhabitants.	Emigrants.	Total.
Maronites — — — —	518,000	91,000	609,000
Sunni — — — —	205,000	6,000	211,000
Shi'ah — — — —	200,000	5,000	205,000
Greek Orthodox — — —	226,000	55,000	281,000
Druses — — — —	71,000	4,000	75,000
Greek Catholics — — —	87,000	11,000	98,000
Armenian Orthodox (contiguously)	93,000	do.	93,000
Minorities — — — —	41,000	3,000	44,000
Total	1,441,000	175,000	1,616,000

The following are the estimated figures for the movement of population in the Lebanon, and the estimated natural increase:‡

Communities.	1932 Census.	End 1943.	Difference.	Percentage.
Sunni — —	179,000	205,000	25,000	13·1
Shi'ah — —	159,000	200,000	41,000	25·7
Druses — —	65,000	71,000	5,000	7·6
Maronites —	269,000	518,000	249,000	92·6
Greek Catholics	55,000	87,000	32,000	58·2
Greek Orthodox	92,000	226,000	134,000	145·6

The instructive conclusions which can be drawn from these tables are:

(a) Most of the emigrants from the Lebanon and those who continue

* Since the demarcation of the Syro-Lebanese Frontier has not been completed, estimates of the area of the two States vary. The area of the Autonomous Sanjak of the Lebanon (1861-1915) was 3,700 kilometres and its population was 400,000.

† "La Syrie et l'Orient," Beirut, 10-15, 6, 1945.

‡ *Ibid.* The figures in these tables and the statistical calculations should be accepted with extreme caution on account of the backward methods used for demographical statistics in the Lebanon.

Chapter Ten

SYRIA AND LEBANON

The Land and the People

The area of the present Syria and Lebanon lies to the north of Arabian Deserts and is the western fringe of the Fertile Crescent. The two republics do not enclose within their boundaries a natural geographic entity and their climate and topography are best studied in relation to the surrounding countries;[1] but within the political boundaries of the two states, the following geographical divisions may roughly be distinguished:

(a) *The Coastal Strip.* This is about twenty miles wide near Latakia and rather less just north of Tripoli, but in some places disappears and the mountains meet the sea. Olives, bananas, citrus, and vegetables are cultivated immediately near Beirut.

(b) *The Mountains.* Starting from the north, the first coastal mountains are the Jebel Ansariye (also known as the Alawi [illegible] the western slopes. To the south is the Homs–Tripoli gap and then starts the Lebanon range with peaks of over 10,000 feet. Even on the upper slopes of this range water is plentiful, there is close cultivation, and the villages and towns are prosperous. Near Beirut are situated the mountain resorts to which many of the city workers move each night when the summer brings its humid heat. The interior ranges of mountains lying parallel to that of the Lebanon are the Anti-Lebanon (between Homs and Zahle) reaching over 7,000 feet and the range of Hermon (between Zahle and the Israel border) which reaches 9,000 feet. Water and cultivation are far less plentiful on these than on the coastal mountains. Further inland still and to the south of Damascus lie the Leja, a bleak area of igneous rock, and the Jebel Druze, which reaches 5,000–6,000 feet and lies north of the Jordan border.

(c) *Plains and Plateaux.* Hardly any of the territory of Syria and Lebanon lies less than 700 feet above sea-level and south of Homs almost all the land is over 1,600 feet. The richest agricultural land is on fairly high ground and forms part of a

[1] See W. B. Fisher, *The Middle East: a Physical, [illegible] and Regional Geography* (London, Methuen, 1950).

LATAKIA
LEBANON
PALESTINE

T U R K
TRANSJORDA

EVD MAP (G)

Lebanon mEI

II. [illegible]

(Visited 1 - 15 December 1952)

1. The total area of Le ...non is about 4,300 square miles, the population being estimated in 1950 at one and-a-quarter million, of whom a high proportion live in the principal towns. For many years there has been considerable migration to foreign countries, and it is said that as many Lebanese live abroad as are to be found in their native land. 131 162 169

2. Lebanon is mainly a fruit-growing agricultural country, but pipelines from Middle East oil fields are being laid across the country to connect with newly constructed installations and harbours on the coast. In the course this development may influence the economy of the country. 241 345

3. Great hopes of agricultural expansion - to be accompanied, it is claimed, by schemes of rural community development - are based upon the Litani Dam and irrigation project. At the time of our visit this project was under discussion between the Government and the United States Technical Cooperation Administration (Point IV), but matters had not advanced sufficiently to justify our attempting to follow in detail the intentions with regard to community welfare centres. 241 433 185

4. The agency of the Lebanese Government responsible for social [illegible] welfare (SSS) has existed in the status of Ministry. Until ... recently, there had been a change of government and the new Minister of Social ... also held the rural portfolio. The Director-General of the Department also ... had not been continuously in office over the past years. No reply had been returned by the relevant Department to the Secretary-General's request (at the end of 1952) for information on community welfare centres. Background information was difficult to obtain. A decree which would have permitted the provision of multi-purpose community centres and enabled government support to be given in cash or by way of services, had been promulgated in 1951 (Appendix I). The decree had not, however, been put into operation. The initiative in instituting or developing such multi-purpose activities as we had the opportunity of seeing at Chouen, Anjar and Jdeidi had come mainly from voluntary agencies. 447 185

5. We visited the Chouen Reconstruction Centre and Anjar project on the 4th and 12th of December. The purpose of the original centre was to provide for Armenian refugees from World War I and in the earlier stages both the Near East Foundation and the Inward Development Cooperative Corporation shared responsibilities for financing and management of settlements in this area. More recently, the Near East Foundation decided to concentrate its activities in Syria and Greece and brought its work at Chouen to a close. Mr. Poladian of the Near East Foundation, who had had a long experience between the wars in community organization in Bulgaria before coming to Chouen, then transferred to the Development Corporation. With his wife, he now supervises the various activities in a group of villages located in the Beqaa Valley between Beirut and Damascus. These activities include control of malaria, recreational programmes, organization of marketing, provision of seedlings and plants, poultry breeding, milk co-operatives and educational projects. 361 125

6. At the time of our visit an illustrated lecture by an American veterinary expert (Point IV) was in progress. The co-operative milk marketing scheme appeared to be successful and to make a useful contribution to the milk supply of Beirut. The housing provided for the settlers and the general appearance of the village at Anjar were satisfactory. Most of the Arab village of Majdel-Anjar were Christians only two years on. In a former Armenian school house there was a primitive nursery and child 234 474 600

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Lebanon

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Lebanon, an independent republic since 1941, was formerly part of Greater Syria. It constituted one of the Levant states partitioned in 1920 and governed by France under a mandate awarded by the League of Nations. Frequently designated as the "Switzerland of the Near East," Lebanon comprises a narrow strip of land along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean which has a coastline of about 130 miles and a total area of approximately 3,900 square miles. It is less than 70 miles in depth at its widest point, and is bounded inland by Syria on the north and the east and by Israel on the south.

The topography of the region is dominated by two mountain ranges which parallel the coast and are separated by a series of depressions, part of the rift which continues through the Jordan Valley and north to the great lakes of East Africa. The Lebanon Mountains, from which the country derives its name, rise abruptly from the coastal plain. They form a continuous chain of peaks, the highest of which is Qornet es Sawda, with an elevation of 10,131 feet. The eastern range, collectively known as the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, extends along the Syrian frontier. Both the northern portion and the southern extension, usually called Mount Hermon, contain peaks from 5,000 to 9,200 feet in height.

Between the two mountain chains lies the fertile plain of the Bekaa: it is slightly over 10 miles in width in the north, but tapers toward the south. The northern Bekaa is drained by the Orontes River, which flows from its source in the Lebanon Mountains near Baalbek northward

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